

1960s type shows. This is potent stuff on our streets that our kids are getting. Because when they have the huge quantities of it and it is cheap in the schools and the streets, there is no amount of DARE programs or treatment programs or putting policemen on the street that can stop this.

Mr. Speaker, we know where it comes from. Some of these countries have been very aggressive for a number of years in eradicating the coca leaves and particularly the production in the cocaine. In Peru and Bolivia, we have seen a turnaround. We have seen their percentages drop.

In Colombia they are at war, and we need to help the Nation of Colombia fight this so that we do not have troops down there. We also have our number one oil supplier on their border, Venezuela, and the Panama Canal on the other border.

□ 1615

That is where we have a compelling national interest. But we have some real problems in Mexico. The Mexican leaders, their government seem very committed to trying to change this problem. But we have deep problems.

Everybody says we should forget the past, but it is difficult to forget the past right now when our information has been compromised and when we have had so much corruption.

We are hopeful, and one of the debates we are going to hear in Congress is how we should deal with this decertification question, because it gets inevitably wrapped up in NAFTA, trade questions, and the fact that an important and critical part of our long-term interests will be to work with Mexico.

But the question is, are we going to have any accountability standards? Since most of the drugs coming into my hometown and the rest of this country are pouring across the border from Mexico right now, we need to see results and not just rhetoric.

Over the next few days and weeks, we are going to hear a number of Members coming down here talking about this issue and about the drug issue as a whole as we develop packages, as we try to work with the administration and drug czar, General McCaffrey, to try to solve this problem. I am looking forward to seeing if we continue to make progress.

EVEN THOUGH ECONOMY IS GOOD, WORKERS IN OIL PATCH ARE STILL LOSING JOBS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HAYES). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, before I start, I would first like to associate a few words with the legislation, H.R. 396, which passed

today that would honor our former colleague Ron Dellums by naming a Federal building after him in Oakland, California.

Let me indicate my great appreciation and respect for the dedication and service of Ron Dellums. I can think of no better tribute to him than the naming of a building in his beloved Oakland after him. I salute the legislation and support it.

Mr. Speaker, I have another topic that I would like to raise today, and I believe that there is much that we need to do on this issue. Although we look now at a budget surplus and are probably in the best economy that we have had along with its longevity of a number of years, we still have concerns.

What does the number 50,000 make you think of? For myself, it signifies the number of jobs lost in Texas because of the harsh realities of our modern economy and the energy crisis. But there has to be hope for those workers in the oil patch.

That is why I convened with top administration and congressional officials at the White House last month a meeting to discuss how we could better address the needs of energy workers who lose their jobs in mass layoffs.

When the Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman and White House Chief of Staff John Podesta expressed their concern about their circumstances, I felt that we could work together to improve the question of job loss in communities throughout this Nation, Boeing, for example, and the State of Washington.

With that cooperation in mind, we have already been able to get part of the work done. In the State of the Union Address, President Clinton stressed that he would promote programs that would bring relief to communities that are struggling with mass layoffs.

The real question is, do we have the information down at the local level? This would include job retraining and rapid response teams that help workers and employers in times of crisis. I have found that we really need to get this information not only to the employers but to the workers.

The President followed up on that commitment by pledging \$1.6 billion for training for displaced workers and \$65 million to help those workers find new jobs in the budget for the next fiscal year.

It is unique in the oil patch because we would like not to lose these workers while they have been laid off because we do believe in the supporting of a domestic oil policy.

I also plan to introduce a piece of legislation called the Job Protection Initiative Act in the coming weeks that will bring much needed structured assistance to the energy industry which has been hit by spontaneous negative market activity.

My initiative will trigger faster governmental response to mass layoffs and

will encourage employers to use Federal and State resources that are available to them already by requiring that the Secretary of Labor establish an office to monitor job layoffs across the United States, authorizing \$500 million to be used to help private companies establish lifelong learning programs for their employees, and give the Secretary of Labor the authority to officially recognize those businesses that cooperate with the government to minimize the damage that their layoffs cause.

Although the support of many of our Members of Congress will be needed in order to pass this initiative, I expect that all Members will be able to relate to times when industries that reside in their districts struggled in similar crises and support these efforts.

As one of the representatives of those who work in the energy arena, the oil and gas arena, I realized that it is difficult to be a victim of a certain industry's downfall in these good times. Someone needs to listen, and so we must listen to those voices of individuals who support their family who are now being laid off because of the down trend in the energy industry and of course the low cost of oil per barrel.

This helps the consumer, and we want to continue to help the consumer, but we also need to help our workers. I hope that my colleagues in Congress will see the benefit of also paying attention to those individuals who suffer layoffs even in this good economy.

I would expect my legislation to be offered in the next couple of weeks. Mr. Speaker, I ask for your support and all of my colleagues so that we can respond to the working men and women of America who keep the engine of this economy going when they most need us in their time of need.

RENEW COMMITMENT TO BRING FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY TO ENSLAVED PEOPLE IN CUBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow we commemorate 3 years since the Castro dictatorship indiscriminately killed four young men, three of them American citizens, when two Cuban MIGs shot down their aircraft over international waters while they were on a humanitarian mission.

Three years after the cold blooded murder of Pablo Morales, Carlos Costa, Armando Alejandre, and Mario de la Pena, the Castro dictatorship continues its brutal reign of terror over the Cuban people, and in fact it has intensified this attack.

Just last week, the rubber stamp Cuban National Assembly approved a new law that punishes with 15 years in prison or more anyone on the island

who promotes information that the totalitarian regime considers to be counter-revolutionary.

This measure outlaws "the supply, search or gathering of information" and bans "the collaboration directly or through third parties, with radio and television stations, newspapers, magazines, and other mass media" that do not follow the lines of the Castro regime.

The new law is aimed at silencing the increasing number of dissidents, of independent journalists, and of human rights activists who are fighting day in and day out for freedom and democracy in my native homeland of Cuba.

These activists are a main source of information to the international community on the human rights violations that occur in Cuba. They literally put their lives on the line to let the world know of the repression imposed on the Cuban people. Because of their effectiveness, the regime has initiated an all-out crackdown against them.

According to the International Press Institute, "Cuban authorities routinely threaten, arrest and jail journalists, often attempting to persuade them to leave the country."

One persecuted independent journalist, Juan Tellez Rodriguez, recently said of the Castro regime that "The government in Havana continues to close itself off to the world, it is deaf to the cries of the international community and it insists on its closed, oppressive political system." He continues saying "It does not even open to its own people, who suffer and die slowly."

Castro himself has made it clear that he has no intention of implementing any type of democratic reform in Cuba.

Earlier this year, the Cuban tyrant reiterated his commitment to socialism or death and claimed "I still speak the same, dress the same and think the same." Oh, yes, we know this.

The last few weeks have been particularly busy for Castro and his thugs. For example, on January 5, pro human rights activist, Ernesto Colas Garcia, was detained, threatened, and beaten by Castro's thugs when returning home from a human rights organization meeting.

On January 14, five dissidents, among them, Rolando Munoz Yyobre and Ofelia Nardo, were detained while on their way to attend a peaceful march in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.

On January 20, Cuban independent journalist, Jesus Diaz Hernandez, was sentenced to 4 years in jail for dangerous social behavior for his reporting of human rights abuses. Sadly, under the new law imposed by the dictator, the next independent journalist like Jesus Diaz Hernandez will not be sentenced to 4 years but rather at least 15 years in prison.

Just this morning, The Miami Herald reports that Dr. Oscar Eliaz Biscet, of the Lawton Foundation for Human

Rights, a leading dissident group on the island, was arrested after participating in an event to commemorate the third anniversary of the regime's massacre of the Brothers to the Rescue pilots. Dr. Biscet had been previously detained and arrested for pro-democracy activities.

Mr. Speaker, the Clinton administration should wake up and take notice before it continues weakening U.S. policy toward Castro, because the dictator has no intention of loosening up his grip on power. Flirting with the dictator through easing of sanctions will not work. And certainly no baseball game or rock musical concert will bring freedom to Cuba either.

The United States should not reward Castro for his repression. Doing so would be unconscionable.

Let us remember the four brave young men who were killed by Castro's thugs just 3 years ago, Pablo Morales, Carlos Costa, Armando Alejandro, and Mario de la Pena. In their names and in the names of so many others who are victims of Castro oppression, let us renew our commitment to help bring freedom and democracy to the enslaved people of Cuba.

HMO REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BAIRD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today along with many Members of my fellow freshman Democrats to address an issue that is central for the citizens of our country and to our State.

As many of us have just finished long campaigns, we are firsthand in touch with the needs of the people of this country, and one of those crying needs is clearly the need for HMO reform.

We are here today to talk about that issue and to talk about what we can do to solve this critical problem. The distinguished colleagues who have joined me today will talk about their perspective from firsthand experience with their constituents with people needing health care who have been prevented from getting the health care they need unfortunately by the current status quo. I would like to thank my colleagues in advance for their remarks.

Several years ago, the health care industry launched a massive advertising campaign. There was a couple named Harry and Louise who threatened us that the sky was going to fall if the President's health care plan passed. Without commenting on the merits of that particular plan, I can comment on what Harry and Louise said.

Harry and Louise said that, if we followed the President's plan, disaster would strike in the following way: people would lose their right to choose

their own health care provider, they would have to wait for needed health care, that bureaucrats would make their health care decisions for them instead of their doctors.

I am sorry to say that Harry and Louise were exactly right about what would happen, but the cause was the people who sponsored the Harry and Louise ads to begin with.

The health insurance industry led consumers to believe they would have fewer choices of providers, that the type of care they receive would be decided by government bureaucrats and not their doctors.

But it is the health insurance industry that profits while people are sick that has been responsible for limiting one's choice of doctors, that has been responsible for impeding the care health care providers would wish to provide that has caused long waits and unfortunately has deprived American people of the health care they deserve and have come to expect.

But I am pleased to say that we now have an opportunity to correct many of those wrongs. With House bill 358, the Patients' Bill of Rights, this measure promotes common sense reforms, reforms that each and every consumer can understand and appreciate.

Under this bill, the Patients' Bill of Rights, patients will be allowed to make medical decisions with their doctors without the interference from insurance company bureaucracies and accountants. Let me say again because it has to be underscored, patients and their doctors will make health care decisions under this bill, not insurance company executives and their accountants.

As I travel through my district of southwest Washington, let me tell you that this is one of the things I hear most often.

□ 1630

The other thing I hear is that people want to choose their provider. They want to decide which physician they will be able to see or which nurse practitioner or clinical psychologist. The patient should have that right, and under this bill, H.R. 358, the patient will have that right.

This measure also guarantees the patient the right to emergency treatment. The last challenge a patient should face, if they are facing an emergency medical decision, should be worrying about whether their insurance company will approve the procedure. And yet we have countless stories of precisely that happening.

In rural areas this is particularly important, where patients may not be able to travel long distances to meet with the approved provider and they want to see the provider they have come to know and trust with their family over the years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge this body, when the bill comes before us, to pass